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**LETTERS**  
**FROM AFAR**

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**By V · I · LENIN**



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# LETTERS FROM AFAR

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BY  
V. I. LENIN

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Hamilton, Ontario*



INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS  
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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

NEWS of the outbreak of the revolution, the establishment of Soviets in Petrograd and Moscow, the abdication of the Tsar and the formation of the bourgeois Provisional Government reached Lenin in Zurich, Switzerland, through the extra editions of the local newspapers on March 15, 1917. The following day he wrote to Alexandra Kollontai in Norway that "the 'first stage of the first revolution' bred by the war will be neither final nor confined to Russia" and observed that, although the workers, supported by the revolutionary soldiers, had carried through the revolution, state power was seized by the bourgeoisie according to "the same 'old' European pattern."

With great avidity Lenin absorbs all the news from Russia in the English, French and German papers he can lay his hands on and thinks of how speedily he can end his years of exile and return to the scene of action among the Petrograd workers where he began his revolutionary work more than twenty years before. On March 17 he writes again to Kollontai, making arrangements to obtain direct news from his co-workers in Russia, and completes the draft of the theses outlining his views on the revolution.

In his preliminary theses Lenin adjures his comrades to be prepared for the possible attempt to restore the monarchy and to consider the Provisional Government, which has "snatched" power from the proletariat, as having the same imperialist aims in the war as the Tsar's government. After making a class analysis of the government in power, showing that it is nothing but a government of capitalists and landowners, Lenin proves that it cannot give the masses what they expect from the revolution—peace, bread and freedom. Only "a complete victory of the next stage of the revolution and the conquest of power by a workers' government" could secure the fruits of the revolution for the broad masses of the people.

Not unity with the vacillating and compromising parties active among the workers and peasants, but the building of a revolutionary Socialist party and a relentless struggle for the leadership of the continually rising revolutionary masses; not confidence in the Provisional Government, but a vigorous campaign of exposure of its true capitalist nature and imperialist aims—this is what Lenin insists upon in his first brief messages to the Bolsheviks in Russia. "Spread out! Arouse new strata! Awaken new initiative, form new organisations in every layer, and *prove* to them that *peace* can



come only with the armed Soviet of Workers' Deputies in power," are Lenin's clarion call to his comrades-in-arms.

During March 20-April 8 Lenin wrote the famous five "Letters from Afar" which are reproduced here in full (pp. 5-42). The last letter, written on the day of his departure for Russia, was not completed. The first letter, "The First Stage of the First Revolution," reached Petrograd and was published in the *Pravda*, April 3-4, while the other four were published only after Lenin's death in 1924. This series of letters, the main ideas of which the reader will find summarised by Lenin at the beginning of the fifth letter (p. 40), touched upon all the fundamental problems of the revolution and charted the course of its development. They carry the imprint of the genius that was Lenin—his Marxist clarity, acute revolutionary perception, abounding faith in the masses—foreshadowing who was to be the recognised organiser and leader of the Russian Revolution and the founder of the workers' state which covers one-sixth of the earth's surface.

The Russian Revolution has opened the epoch of the world proletarian revolution, Lenin informs the revolutionary workers of other countries. On April 8, the day of his departure for Russia, he pens his "Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers" (pp. 42-48) aimed to reach beyond the confines of the Swiss labor movement. The Bolshevik viewpoint of the nature of the Russian Revolution, the attitude toward the imperialist war, and the situation in the international Socialist movement are presented by Lenin. Written at the same time and dealing with the international significance and tasks of the Russian Revolution, the "Farewell Letter" may be considered complementary to the "Letters from Afar" which is the reason for its inclusion in this booklet.

In reprinting the "Letters from Afar" as a separate volume in the Little Lenin Library, the publishers call attention to Volumes 8 to 13 in this series which include selected writings of Lenin from the overthrow of the Tsar in March to the seizure of power in November, 1917. These writings cover the most important stages of the developing revolution and the part played in it by the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin. The reader is also directed to Volumes XX and XXI of Lenin's *Collected Works*, covering the entire period of the Revolution of 1917 and containing all the writings and speeches of Lenin during this period. In these volumes will be found also numerous explanatory and biographical notes which will aid the reader in understanding the events of the period and the various allusions made by Lenin.

ALEXANDER TRACHTENBERG.

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## LETTERS FROM AFAR

### FIRST LETTER

#### THE FIRST STAGE OF THE FIRST REVOLUTION

THE first revolution arising out of the imperialist World War has broken out. This first revolution will, certainly, not be the last.

The first stage of this first revolution, namely, the *Russian* revolution of March 14, 1917, is over, according to the scanty information at the writer's disposal in Switzerland. Surely this first stage of our revolution will not be the last one.

How could such a "miracle" happen, that in eight days—the period indicated by M. Miliukov in his boastful telegram to all the representatives of Russia abroad—a monarchy that had maintained itself for centuries, and continued to maintain itself during three years of tremendous national class conflicts of 1905-1907, could utterly collapse?

There are no miracles in nature or in history, yet every sudden turn in history, including every revolution, presents such a wealth of material, it unfolds such unexpectedly peculiar co-ordinations of forms of conflict and alignment of fighting forces, that there is much that must appear miraculous to the burgher's mind.

A combination of a whole series of conditions of world-wide historic importance was required for the tsarist monarchy to collapse in a few days. Let us point out the principal ones.

Without the three years, 1905-1907, of tremendous class conflicts and of revolutionary energy of the Russian proletariat, this second revolution could not possibly have had the rapid progress indicated in the fact that its *first* phase was accomplished in a few days. The first revolution (1905) ploughed the ground deeply and uprooted the prejudices of centuries; it awakened to political life and struggle millions of workers and tens of millions of peasants. The first revolution revealed to the workers and peasants, as well as to the world, all the classes (and all the principal parties) of Russian society in their true character; the actual alignment of their in-



terests, their powers and modes of action, their immediate and ultimate objectives. This first revolution, and the succeeding counter-revolutionary period (1907-1914), fully revealed the nature of the tsarist monarchy as having reached the "utmost limit"; it exposed all the infamy and vileness, all the cynicism and corruption of the tsarist clique dominated by that monster, Rasputin; it exposed all the bestiality of the Romanov family—that band of assassins which bathed Russia in the blood of the Jews, the workers, the revolutionaries—those landowners, "first among peers," who owned millions of acres of land and would stoop to any brutality, to any crime—ready to ruin or crush any section of the population, however numerous, in order to preserve the "sacred property rights" for themselves and for their class.

Without the revolution of 1905-1907, without the counter-revolution of 1907-1914, it would have been impossible to secure so clear a "self-determination" of all classes of the Russian people and of all the peoples inhabiting Russia, a clarification of the relation of these classes to each other and to the tsarist monarchy, as transpired during the eight days of the March revolution. This eight-day revolution, if we may express ourselves in terms of metaphors, was "performed" after a dozen informal as well as dress rehearsals; the "actors" knew each other and their rôles, their places, and the entire setting; they knew every detail through and through, down to the last more or less significant shade of political tendency and mode of action.

But, in order that the first great revolution of 1905, which Messrs. Guchkov and Miliukov and their satellites condemned as a "great rebellion" should, after the lapse of a dozen years, lead to the "glorious revolution" of 1917—so termed by the Guchkovs and Miliukovs because (for the *present*) it has put them into power—there was still needed a great, mighty, all-powerful "regisseur," who was, on the one hand, in a position to accelerate the course of history on a grand scale, and, on the other, to produce world-wide crises of unheard-of intensity: economic, political, national and international. In addition to an unusual acceleration of world history, there were also needed particularly sharp historic turns so that during one of them the blood-stained chariot of tsarism might be overturned in a trice.

This all-powerful "regisseur," this mighty accelerator of events, was the imperialist World War.

Now it can no longer be doubted that this war is world-wide, for the United States and China have been half dragged in already, and to-morrow will be completely involved in it.

Nor can it any longer be doubted that the war is imperialistic on both sides. Only the capitalists and their satellites, the social-patriots and social-chauvinists, can deny or suppress this fact. Both the German and the Anglo-French bourgeoisie are waging war for the grabbing of foreign territory, for the strangulation of small nations, for financial supremacy over the world, for the division and redistribution of colonies, for saving the tottering capitalist régime by means of deceiving and disuniting the workers in the various countries.

It was objectively inevitable that the imperialist war should immensely quicken and unusually sharpen the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, and transform itself into a civil war between hostile classes.

This transformation has been started by the March revolution, whose first stage has shown us, first, a joint attack on tsarism delivered by two forces: on the one hand, the whole bourgeois and landowning class of Russia, with all their unenlightened followers and very enlightened managers, in the persons of the Anglo-French ambassadors and capitalists; and, on the other, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

These three political camps, three fundamental political forces: (1) The tsarist monarchy, the head of the feudal landowning class, the head of the old bureaucracy and of the higher military commanders; (2) the Russia of the bourgeoisie and landowners represented by the Octobrists and Cadets, with the petty bourgeoisie in their wake; (3) the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, seeking for allies among the entire proletariat and the whole mass of the poorest population—these three fundamental political forces have revealed themselves with utmost clarity even in the first eight days of the "first stage." This is evident even to such an observer as the present writer who is far away from the scene of events and is compelled to confine himself to the meagre dispatches of foreign papers.

But before going into further detail in this matter, I must come back to that portion of my letter which is devoted to a factor of first importance, namely, the imperialist World War.



The belligerent powers, the belligerent groups of capitalists, the "masters" of the capitalist system, and the slave-drivers of capitalist slavery, have been shackled to each other by the war with chains of iron. *One bloody lump*, that is the socio-political life of the historic period through which we are now passing.

The Socialists who deserted to the bourgeoisie at the beginning of the war, all the Davids and Scheidemanns in Germany, the Plekhanovs, Potresovs, Gvozdevs and Co. in Russia, have long been shouting lustily against the "illusions" of the revolutionists, against the "illusions" of the Basle Manifesto, against the "dream farce" of turning the imperialist war into civil war. They have sung hymns of praise to the alleged strength, tenacity and adaptability of capitalism, while they were aiding the capitalists in "adapting," taming, deceiving and disuniting the working classes of the various countries!

But "he who laughs last laughs best." The bourgeoisie was not able to delay for very long the coming of the revolutionary crisis produced by the war. This crisis is growing with irresistible force in all countries, beginning with Germany where, according to a recent observer who visited that country, there is "hunger organised with the ability of genius," and down to England and France where hunger is also looming, though it is not so "wonderfully" organised.

It is natural that the tsarist Russia, where disorganisation was monstrous, where the proletariat is the most revolutionary in the world (not due to any specific characteristics, but because of the vivid traditions of "1905"), the revolutionary crisis should have burst forth earlier than anywhere else. The crisis was hastened by a number of most serious defeats inflicted on Russia and her allies. These defeats disorganised the entire old mechanism of government and the entire old system; they aroused the indignation of *all* classes of the population; they incensed the army and largely wiped out the old body of commanders hailing from the backward nobility and particularly from the rotten officialdom, replacing it with a young and buoyant one of a predominantly bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and declassed origin.

But, if military defeats played the rôle of a negative factor that hastened the outbreak, the alliance of Anglo-French finance-capital, of Anglo-French imperialism, with the Octobrist and Constitutional-

Democratic \* capital of Russia appeared as a factor that speeded this crisis.

This highly important phase of the situation is, for obvious reasons, not mentioned by the Anglo-French press while maliciously emphasised by the German. We Marxists must face the truth soberly, being confused neither by the official lies, the sugary diplomatic and ministerial lies of one group of imperialist belligerents, nor by the sniggering and smirking of its financial and military rivals of the other belligerent group. The whole course of events in the March revolution shows clearly that the English and French embassies with their agents and "associates," who had long made the most desperate efforts to prevent a "separate" agreement and a separate peace between Nicholas II (let us hope and strive that he be the last) and Wilhelm II, strove directly to dethrone Nicholas Romanov.

Let us not harbour any illusions.

The fact that the revolution succeeded so quickly and, apparently, at the first superficial glance, so "radically," is due to an unusual historical conjuncture where there combined, in a strikingly "favourable" manner, absolutely dissimilar movements, absolutely different class interests, absolutely opposed political and social tendencies. There was the conspiracy of the Anglo-French imperialists who encouraged Miliukov, Guchkov and Co. to seize power, with the object of prolonging the imperialist war, with the object of conducting the war more savagely and obstinately, with the object of slaughtering new millions of Russian workers and peasants, in order that the Guchkovs might obtain Constantinople; the French, Syria; the English capitalists, Mesopotamia, etc. This, on the one side. On the other, there was a profound proletarian and popular mass movement (of the entire poorest population of the cities and villages) of a revolutionary character, for bread, for peace, for real freedom.

The revolutionary workers and soldiers have destroyed the infamous tsarist monarchy to its very foundations, being neither elated nor constrained by the fact that, at certain brief historic moments of an exceptional combination of circumstances, they are aided by the struggle of Buchanan, Guchkov, Miliukov and Co., who simply desire to replace one monarch by another.

\* The parties of big capital and landowners, and liberal bourgeoisie respectively.—Ed.

Commentary Party of Canada



Thus, and only thus, did it occur. Thus, and only thus, must be the view of the politician who is not afraid of the truth, who soberly weighs the interrelation of social forces in a revolution, who evaluates every given moment not only from the viewpoint of its present peculiarities, but also from the standpoint of the more fundamental motives, the deeper interrelation of the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, in Russia as well as throughout the world.

The workers and soldiers of Petrograd, as well as the workers and soldiers of all Russia, self-sacrificingly fought against the tsarist monarchy—for freedom, for land for the peasants, for peace as against the imperialist slaughter. Anglo-French imperialist capital, in order to continue and develop the slaughter, engaged in court intrigues, it framed conspiracies, incited and encouraged the Guchkovs and Miliukovs, and contrived a new government, which, ready made, seized power after the proletarian struggle had delivered the first blows against tsarism.

This government is not a fortuitous assemblage of persons.

They are the representatives of the new class that has risen to political power in Russia, the class of the capitalist landowners and bourgeoisie that for a long time has been ruling our country economically, and that, in the revolution of 1905-1907, in the counter-revolutionary period of 1907-1914, and then, with extraordinary rapidity, in the period of the war of 1914-1917, organised itself politically, taking into its hands local self-government, popular education, conventions of every type, the Duma, the war industries committees, etc. This new class was almost in power in 1917; therefore the first blows against tsarism were sufficient to destroy the latter, and to clear the ground for the bourgeoisie. The imperialist war, requiring an incredible exertion of strength, so accelerated the course of development of backward Russia that at a single stroke (at least it seems like a single stroke) we have caught up with Italy, England, even France; we have attained a "coalition," a "national," "parliamentary" government (*i. e.*, a government adapted to carrying on the imperialist slaughter and deceiving the people).

Alongside of this government, which, as regards the present war, is but the clerk of the billion-dollar "firms" England and France, there has arisen a new, unofficial, as yet undeveloped and comparatively weak, workers' government, expressing the interests of the

workers and of all the poorer elements of the city and country population. This is the Petrograd *Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*.

Such is the actual political situation which we must first of all try to establish with the greatest possible objective precision, in order that we may base Marxist tactics on the only solid foundation upon which they should be based—the foundation of facts.

The tsarist monarchy has been beaten, but not destroyed.

The Octobrist-Cadet bourgeois government, wishing to carry on the imperialist war “to a finish,” is in reality the agent of the financial firm “England and France”; it is forced to promise to the people a maximum of liberties and pittances compatible with the maintenance by this government of its power over the people and the possibility of continuing the imperialist war.

The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is a workers' government in embryo, a representative of the interests of all the poorest masses of the population, *i. e.*, of nine-tenths of the population which is striving for peace, bread, and liberty.

The conflict among these three forces determines the situation as it is at present, a transition stage from the first phase of the revolution to the second.

In order that there may be a real struggle against the tsarist monarchy, in order that freedom may really be secured, not merely in words, not in the promises of rhetorical liberalism, it is necessary not that the workers should support the new government, but that this government should support the workers! For the only guarantee of liberty and of a complete destruction of tsarism is the arming of the proletariat, the strengthening, broadening, and developing of the rôle, and significance, and power of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

All the rest is mere phrases and lies, the self-deception of the politicians of the liberal and radical stamp.

Help the arming of the workers, or, at least, do not interfere with it, and the liberty of Russia is invincible, the monarchy incapable of restoration, the republic secured.

Otherwise the people will be deceived. Promises are cheap; promises cost nothing. It is on promises that all the bourgeois politicians in *all* the bourgeois revolutions have been feeding the people and fooling the workers.

“Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, therefore the workers



must support the bourgeoisie," say the worthless politicians among the *Liquidators*.\*

"Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution," say we Marxists, "therefore the workers must open the eyes of the people to the deceptive practices of the bourgeois politicians, must teach the people not to believe in words, but to depend wholly on their own strength, on their own organisation, on their own unity, and on their own arms."

The government of the Octobrists and Cadets, of the Guchkovs and Miliukovs, could give neither peace, nor bread, nor freedom, even if it were sincere in its desire to do so.

It cannot give peace because it is a government for war, a government for the continuation of the imperialist slaughter, a government of conquest, a government that has not uttered one word to renounce the tsarist policy of seizure of Armenia, Galicia, Turkey, of capturing Constantinople, of reconquering Poland, Courland, Lithuania, etc. This government is bound hand and foot by Anglo-French imperialist capital. Russian capital is merely one branch of the world "firm" known as "England and France" manipulating hundreds of billions of rubles.

It cannot give bread, since it is a bourgeois government. At best it may give the people, as the government of Germany has done, "hunger organised with the ability of genius." But the people will not put up with hunger. The people will learn, probably very soon, that there is bread, and it can be obtained in no other way than by means that do not show any respect for the sanctity of capital and landownership.

It cannot give freedom, since it is a government of landowners and capitalists, which is afraid of the people.

In another article we will speak of the tactical problems confronting us in our immediate behaviour towards this government. There we shall show wherein consists the peculiarity of the present moment, which is a period of transition from the first stage of the revolution to the second, and why the slogan, the "order of the day" in the *present* moment must be: "Workers, you have displayed marvels of proletarian and popular heroism in the civil war against tsarism; you must display marvels of proletarian and

\* Reformist Socialists—Mensheviks—who proposed the liquidation of the underground party organisation and instead favoured legal activities.—*Ed.*

nation-wide organisation in order to prepare your victory in the second stage of the revolution."

Limiting ourselves in the meanwhile to an analysis of the class struggle and the interrelation of class forces in this stage of the revolution, we must also raise the question: Who are the allies of the proletariat in this revolution?

It has two allies: first, the broad mass of the semi-proletarian and, partly, the petty peasant population of Russia, numbering scores of millions and forming the overwhelming majority of the population. This great mass needs peace, bread, liberty, land. This mass will inevitably be under a certain influence of the bourgeoisie, particularly of the petty bourgeoisie, which it resembles rather closely in its conditions of life, vacillating, as it does, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The cruel lessons of the war, which will become all the more cruel as Guchkov, Lvov, Miliukov and Co. carry on the war with greater energy, will inevitably push this mass toward the proletariat, compelling it to follow the proletariat. We must now, taking advantage of the freedom under the new régime and of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, strive, first of all and above all, to enlighten and organise this mass. Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, Soviets of Agricultural Workers,—these are among our most urgent tasks. We shall thereby strive not only that the agricultural workers should establish special Soviets of their own, but also that the poorest and propertyless peasants should organise separately from the well-to-do peasants. The special tasks and special forms of the organisation urgently needed at present, will be dealt with in another letter.

The second ally of the Russian proletariat is the proletariat of the warring countries and of all countries in general. At present, it is to a considerable degree weighed down by the war, and by the social-chauvinists who, like Plekhanov, Gvozdev, Potresov in Russia, have deserted to the bourgeoisie, but all too often speak in the workers' name. The liberation of the workers from their influence has progressed with every month of the imperialist war, and the Russian Revolution will necessarily accelerate this process tremendously.

Hand in hand with these two allies, the proletariat of Russia can and will proceed, while utilising the peculiarities of the present transition moment, to win, first, a democratic republic and the victory of the peasantry over the landlords, then Socialism, which



alone can give peace, bread, and freedom to the peoples exhausted by the war.

N. LENIN.

Written March 20, 1917.

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## SECOND LETTER

### THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND THE PROLETARIAT

THE most important document at my disposal up to date (March 21) is the March 16 issue of the English ultra-conservative and ultra-bourgeois newspaper, *Times*, which contains a summary of the news dealing with the revolution in Russia. A source more favourably—expressing it mildly—inclined to the government of Guchkov and Miliukov, than this paper, would, of course, be difficult to find.

Reporting from Petrograd on Wednesday, March 14, when there was in existence only the *first* Provisional Government, *i. e.*, the Executive Committee of the Duma composed of 13 men with Rodzianko at their head, and including, as the paper says, two “Socialists,” Kerensky and Chkheidze, the *Times* correspondent writes:

“A group of 22 elected members of the Upper House [State Council] including M. Guchkov, M. Stakhovich, Prince Trubetskoy, and Professors Vassiliev, Grimm, and Vernadsky, yesterday addressed a telegram to the Tsar,” in which they implored him to save “the dynasty,” etc., etc., by convoking the Duma and by naming some one who enjoys the “confidence of the nation” to head the government. “What the Emperor may decide to do on his arrival to-day is unknown at the hour of telegraphing, but one thing is quite certain. Unless His Majesty immediately complies with the wishes of the most moderate elements among his loyal subjects, the influence at present exercised by the Provisional Committee of the Imperial Duma will pass wholesale into the hands of the Socialists, who want to see a republic established, but who are unable to institute any kind of orderly government and would inevitably precipitate the country into anarchy within and disaster without.”

How statesmanlike, wise, and clear! How well the English sympathiser (if not the leader) of the Guchkovs and the Miliukovs understands the interrelation of class forces and interests! “The most moderate elements among his loyal subjects,” *i. e.*, the monarchist landowners and capitalists, want to gain power, because they realise perfectly well that otherwise “influence” will pass into the hands of the “Socialists.” Why into the hands of the “Social-

ists," and not into any other hands? Because the English Guchkovite sees clearly that there is no other social force in the political arena and that there can be none. The revolution was made by the proletariat. The proletariat displayed heroism; it shed its blood; it swept with it the large masses of the toiling and very poor sections of the population; it demands bread, peace, and freedom; it demands a republic; it sympathises with Socialism. At the same time a handful of landowners and capitalists headed by the Guchkovs and Miliukovs wishes to delude the will and the aspirations of the overwhelming majority; it wishes to make a deal with the disappearing monarchy, to sustain and save it. Appoint Lvov and Guchkov, Your Majesty, and we will support the monarchy against the people. This is the whole meaning and essence of the new government's policy!

But how do they propose to justify this deception, this fooling of the people, this violation of the will of the vast majority of the population?

By using the old and ever new method of the bourgeoisie,—by maligning the people. Thus the English Guchkovite maligns and vilifies, spurts and sputters: "anarchy within and disaster without," no "orderly government"!!

You are wrong, my worthy Guchkovite! The workers want a republic, which is a much more "orderly" government than a monarchy. What assurance have the people that a second Romanov will not establish a second Rasputin? It is the prolongation of the war, it is the new government, that carries with it the threat of disaster. Only a proletarian republic, supported by the village workers and by the poorest section of the urban and rural population, can insure peace, bread, order, and freedom.

These outcries against anarchy are simply meant to cover up the selfish purposes of the capitalists, who are intent on enriching themselves through the war and war loans, who are intent on restoring the monarchy against the interests of the people.

"... Yesterday," continues the correspondent, "the Social-Democratic Party issued a proclamation of a most seditious character, which was spread broadcast throughout the city. They are mere doctrinaires, but their power for mischief is enormous at a time like the present. M. Kerensky and M. Chkheidze, who realise that without the support of the officers and the more moderate elements of the people they cannot hope to avoid anarchy, have to reckon with their less prudent associates, and are insensibly driven to take up an attitude which complicates the task of the Provisional Committee."



Oh, great English Guchkovite diplomat! How "imprudently" you have babbled out the truth!

The "Social-Democratic Party" and the "less prudent associates," with whom Kerensky and Chkheidze are forced "to reckon," are evidently the Central or the Petrograd Committee of our party that was reconstructed by the conference of January, 1912; they are those very "Bolsheviks" whom the bourgeoisie always denounces as "doctrinaires" for being faithful to their "doctrine," *i. e.*, to the tenets, the principles, the teachings, the purposes of *Socialism*. Clearly, the English Guchkovite denounces as seditious and doctrinaire the appeal and conduct of our party because it urges the masses to fight for a republic, for peace, for a complete destruction of the tsarist monarchy, for bread for the people.

Bread for the people and peace, that is sedition; ministerial places for Guchkov and Miliukov, that is "order." Old, familiar talk!

Now what are the tactics of Kerensky and Chkheidze, as characterised by the English Guchkovite?

They are vacillating. On the one hand, the Guchkovite praises them. They, he claims, "realise" (good boys! clever boys!) that without the "support" of the officers and the more moderate elements of the people they cannot hope to avoid anarchy (and here we have been assuming, in accordance with our doctrine, with our Socialist teachings, that it is the capitalists who are forcing anarchy and wars upon human society, and that only the passing of *all* political power into the hands of the proletariat and the poorest elements of the people can rid us of wars, anarchy, hunger!). On the other hand, he complains, they "have to reckon with their less prudent associates," *i. e.*, the Bolsheviks, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, reconstructed and united by the Central Committee.\*

But what force is it that "drives" Kerensky and Chkheidze to "reckon" with the Bolshevik party, to which they have never belonged, which they themselves or their literary representatives (the Socialists-Revolutionists, the People's Socialists, the Mensheviks of the Organisation Committee, etc.) have always denounced, con-

\* The Central Committee elected at the 1912 Conference was the organisational centre of the Bolsheviks, while the Organisation Committee was that of the Mensheviks.—Ed.

demned, declared to be an insignificant underground group, a sect of doctrinaires, etc.?

When and where was it ever seen that politicians who have not lost their senses should, in times of revolution, in times of action of the *masses*, be swayed by "doctrinaires"?

The poor English Guchkovite got completely lost. Unable to fathom the situation, he could not tell a complete lie nor the whole truth, and succeeded only in betraying himself.

Kerensky and Chkheidze were forced to reckon with the Social-Democratic Party of the Central Committee because of the influence it exercises on the proletariat, the masses. Despite the arrest and the exile to Siberia of our Deputies in 1914, despite the severest persecutions and arrests which the Petrograd Committee had suffered throughout the war for its underground activity *against* war and against tsarism, our party was found with the masses, with the revolutionary proletariat.

The English say that facts are stubborn things. May we remind our most worthy English Guchkovite of this saying? The fact that during the great days of the revolution our party was leading or at least bravely helping the Petrograd workers had to be admitted by the English Guchkovite himself. He also had to admit the fact that Kerensky and Chkheidze are vacillating between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The followers of Gvozdev, the "defencists," *i. e.*, the social-chauvinists, *i. e.*, the defenders of the imperialist, predatory war, are at the present moment in full agreement with the bourgeoisie. Kerensky, having become a member of the Cabinet, *i. e.*, of the 'second Provisional Government, has also completely joined the bourgeoisie. Chkheidze has not followed; he is still wavering between the Provisional Government of the bourgeoisie, of the Guchkovs and the Miliukovs, and the "provisional government" of the proletariat and the poorest masses of the people, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party united by the Central Committee.

It follows, therefore, that the revolution has proved that we were right when we most persistently called upon the workers to realise clearly the class distinction between the major parties and major tendencies both in the labour movement and among the petty-bourgeoisie, when, for instance, we wrote in No. 47 of the *Geneva Social-Democrat*, on October 13, 1915, that is, almost a year and a half ago:



As heretofore we regard as permissible the participation of Social-Democrats in a provisional revolutionary government together with the democratic groups of the petty-bourgeoisie, but *not* together with the revolutionists-chauvinists. We consider as revolutionists-chauvinists those who want a victory over tsarism in order to win a victory over Germany, in order to loot other countries, in order to strengthen the rule of the Great Russians over the other peoples of Russia, etc. The basis for revolutionary chauvinism is the class position of the petty-bourgeoisie, which is always vacillating between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. To-day it vacillates between chauvinism (which prevents it from being consistently revolutionary even as regards a democratic republic) and proletarian internationalism. The present political exponents of the petty-bourgeoisie in Russia are the Trudoviks,\* the Socialists-Revolutionists, the *Nasha Zaria* (the present *Dielo*), Chkhaidze's faction, the Organisation Committee, Mr. Plekhanov, etc. If the revolutionists-chauvinists were to win power in Russia, we would be against the defence of *their* "fatherland" in the present war. Our slogan is—oppose the chauvinists, even if they be revolutionists and republicans, oppose them and demand the union of the international proletariat for a Socialist revolution.

But let us return to the English Guchkovite.

"... The Provisional Committee of the Imperial Duma," he continues, "appreciating the dangers ahead, have purposely refrained from carrying out the original intention of arresting Ministers, although they could have done so yesterday without the slightest difficulty. The door is thus left open for negotiations, thanks to which we" ("we," i. e., English finance capital and imperialism) "may obtain all the benefits of the new régime without passing through the dread ordeal of the Commune and the anarchy of civil war."

The Guchkovites were for civil war for their own benefit; they are against civil war for the people's benefit, i. e., for that of the actual majority of toilers.

"... The relations between the Provisional Committee of the Duma, which represents the whole nation" (this about the committee of the land-owners' and capitalists' Fourth Duma) "and the Council of Workers' Deputies, representing purely class interests" (the language of a diplomat who has heard in passing some learned words and is intent on concealing that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies represents the proletariat and the impoverished masses, i. e., nine-tenths of the population) "but in the crisis like the present wielding enormous power, have aroused no small misgivings among reasonable men regarding the possibility of a conflict between them—the results of which might be too terrible to describe."

"Happily this danger has been averted, at least for the present" (note this "at least"!)" "thanks to the influence of Mr. Kerensky, a young lawyer of much oratorical ability, who clearly realises" (in contradistinction to Chkhaidze who also "realised" but, in the opinion of the Guchkovite, evidently less clearly?) "the necessity of working with the Committee in the interests of his labour constituency" (i. e., to flirt with labour in order to pull the labour vote). "A satisfactory arrangement was concluded to-day" (Wednesday, March 14), "whereby all unnecessary friction will be avoided."

\* A parliamentary group primarily of peasant deputies under the influence of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.—Ed.

What the arrangement was, whether it was with the *whole* Soviet of Workers' Deputies, what its conditions are, we do not know. The most important thing is now passed over in complete silence by the English Guchkovite. Certainly! It is disadvantageous to the bourgeoisie to make these conditions clear, precise, and public,—for then it may prove more difficult to violate them!

The foregoing lines had already been written when I chanced upon the following very important news. First, the text of the proclamation issued by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies wherein it promises its "support" to the new government, published by the ultra-conservative and ultra-bourgeois Paris newspaper *Temps* (March 20); secondly, excerpts from the speech delivered by Skobelev on March 14 before the Imperial Duma, reprinted in one of the Zurich newspapers (*Neue Züricher Zeitung*, first noon edition, March 21) from a report published in a Berlin newspaper (*National-Zeitung*).

The proclamation issued by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, if the text has not been distorted by the French imperialists, is a most remarkable document. It proves that the Petrograd proletariat, at the time it issued its proclamation, at any rate, was under the preponderant influence of the petty-bourgeois politicians. You will recall that I consider gentlemen of the type of Kerensky and Chkheidze to be politicians of the above-mentioned type.

In the proclamation we find two political ideas and two corresponding slogans:

First, the proclamation states that the government (the new one) consists of "moderate elements." A strange characterisation, utterly inadequate, and of a purely liberal, non-Marxian nature. I, too, am ready to admit that in a certain sense,—just in which sense will be demonstrated in my next letter,—any government at present, *i. e.*, after the completion of the first stage of the revolution, is bound to be "moderate." But under no circumstances must we conceal from ourselves and from the people the fact that this government wishes to prolong the imperialist war, that it is the agent of English capital, that it wants to restore the monarchy, and to strengthen the rule of the landowners and capitalists.

The proclamation declares that every democrat must "support" the new government and that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies requests and authorises Kerensky to participate in the Provisional



Government. The conditions are as follows: the promised reforms must be carried out while the war still lasts; freedom of "cultural" (only cultural?) development of nationalities (a purely Cadet and poverty-stricken programme) must be guaranteed; and a special committee for supervising the activities of the Provisional Government, the committee to consist of members of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and of the "military," must be formed.

The Supervising Committee, which really embodies the ideas and slogans of second order, we shall separately discuss later.

As for the appointment of Kerensky, the Russian Louis Blanc,\* and the call to support the new government, these steps are a classic example of betrayal of the cause of the revolution and the cause of the proletariat. It was betrayals of precisely the same kind that destroyed a number of revolutions of the nineteenth century irrespective of how much the adherents of such a policy were sincere and devoted to Socialism.

The proletariat cannot and must not support a war government, a government pledged to restore the monarchy. In order to fight against reaction, to forestall the possible and probable attempts of the Romanovs and their friends to restore the monarchy and to gather a counter-revolutionary army, it is necessary not at all to support Guchkov, but to organise, develop, and strengthen a proletarian militia, to arm the people under the direction of the proletariat. Without this chief, basic, and radical measure, one cannot hope either to offer serious resistance to the restoration of the monarchy and to the attempts at taking away or curtailing the promised liberties, or to take a firm step on the road that leads to bread, peace, and freedom.

If Chkheidze, who together with Kerensky was a member of the first Provisional Government (the Duma Committee of thirteen), has not entered the second Provisional Government because of his loyalty to principles similar to those indicated above, then all honour to him. This should be frankly stated. Unfortunately, such an interpretation contradicts other facts, and most of all it contradicts the speech delivered by Skobelev who has always worked hand in hand with Chkheidze.

If we are to believe the above-named source, Skobelev said that the "social (evidently, Social-Democratic?) group and the work-

\* A French reformist Socialist who sided with the suppressors of the Paris Commune.—Ed.

ers are quite remote from the aims of the Provisional Government," that the workers demand peace, that, if the war is continued, disaster in the spring is inevitable, that "the workers have entered into a temporary truce (*eine vorläufige Waffenfreundschaft*) with society (liberal society), although their political aims are as remote from those of society as heaven is from earth," and that the "liberals must renounce their senseless (*unsinnige*) war aims," etc.

This speech is a sample of what we designated above, in our quotation from the *Social-Democrat*, as "vacillation" between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Liberals, as long as they remain liberals, cannot "renounce" the "senseless" war aims, particularly since these war aims are not determined by the liberals alone, but by Anglo-French finance capital, a world power measured by hundreds of billions. It is not the liberals whom one must "persuade," but it is the workers to whom one must explain why the liberals are perplexed, why they are bound hand and foot, why they conceal both the treaties concluded between tsarism and England, etc., and the arrangements made between Russian and Anglo-French capital, etc., etc.

When Skobelev tells us that the workers have entered into some kind of an agreement with the liberal groups, and does not protest against it, and does not explain to the workers, from the Duma tribune, its harmfulness to them, he thereby approves of this agreement, and this should not have been done.

Skobelev's direct or indirect, expressed or tacit, approval of the agreement entered into by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies with the Provisional Government, is a swing to the side of the bourgeoisie. Skobelev's statement that the workers demand peace, that their aims are as remote from those of the liberals as heaven is from earth, is a swing to the side of the proletariat.

Purely proletarian, truly revolutionary, thoroughly sound in its conception is the second political idea of the proclamation of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies now under our consideration, namely, the idea of creating a "Supervising Committee" (I do not know whether this is the correct name in Russian, it is a free translation from the French), namely, the idea of proletarian and soldier supervision over the actions of the Provisional Government.

That's the thing! This is worthy of workers who have shed their blood for freedom, for peace, and for bread for the people! This is a real step leading toward real guarantees against tsarism, against



monarchy, as well as against the monarchists Guchkov, Lvov and Co.! This is a sign that the Russian proletariat, regardless of everything, has gone ahead in comparison with the French proletariat of 1848, which had "invested" Louis Blanc with full power! This is proof that the instinct and the intelligence of the proletarian masses are not satisfied with declamations, exclamations, promises of reforms and liberties, are not satisfied with having a "Minister authorised by the workers," or with like tinsel show, but that they seek support where support really is,—in the armed masses of the population organised and led by the proletariat, the class-conscious workers.

This is a step along the right track, but only the first step.

If the "Supervising Committee" remains a purely parliamentary institution, of a purely political nature, *i. e.*, if it remains a commission that will "interrogate" the Provisional Government and receive answers from it, then it is nothing but a toy, then it does not amount to anything.

If, however, it leads toward the creation, immediately and un-failingly, of a really popular, really proletarian militia or workers' armed force, composed of men and women, who will not merely take the place of the police who have been removed and killed off, but render impossible the restoration of such a police by any monarchical-constitutional or democratic-republican government, either in Petrograd or anywhere else in Russia,—then the advanced Russian workers are actually moving toward new and great victories, toward putting an end to the war, toward the actual realisation of the slogan, which, according to the newspapers, was displayed on the banners of the cavalry regiments in Petrograd when they were demonstrating on the square in front of the Imperial Duma:

"Long Live the Socialist Republics of All Countries!"

My ideas concerning this proletarian militia will be presented in the next letter.

In it I shall try to show, on the one hand, that the creation of a popular militia under the leadership of the workers is the correct slogan of the day, meeting the tactical requirements of the unique transition period which the Russian Revolution (and the world revolution) is now going through; on the other hand, that in order to insure the success of such a workers' militia, it must, first, be a national, a universal mass militia, embracing the entire able-bodied population of both sexes; second, it must proceed to combine not



only police functions pure and simple, but also general governmental functions with military ones, and with control over social production and distribution of products.

N. LENIN.

Zürich, March 22, 1917.

P.S. I forgot to date the preceding letter as of March 20, 1917.

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### THIRD LETTER

#### ON PROLETARIAN MILITIA

THE conclusion which I drew yesterday regarding the vacillating tactics of Chkheidze has been fully confirmed to-day, March 23, by two documents. The first is a despatch from Stockholm to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* quoting from the manifesto of the Central Committee of our party, the R.S.-D.L.P., in Petrograd. This document contains not a word about either the support of the Guchkov government or its overthrow: the workers and the soldiers are called upon to organise around the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, to elect representatives to the Soviet in order to fight against tsarism, for a republic, for an eight-hour working day, for the confiscation of landowners' lands and grain reserves, and chiefly for the termination of the plunderers' war. Particularly important and particularly timely is the very correct idea of our C.C. that to obtain peace, relations must be established among the *proletarians of all the warring countries*.

To hope for peace from the negotiations and communications of the bourgeois governments would be self-deception as well as deception of the people.

The second document is another despatch from Stockholm to another German paper (*Vossische Zeitung*) reporting a joint conference of the Chkheidze Duma fraction, the Trudoviks (*Arbeiterfraktion?*) and the representatives of fifteen labour unions held on March 15, and telling of the proclamation issued on the following day. Of the eleven points in this proclamation, the telegram quotes only three: the first, demanding a republic; the seventh, demanding peace and the immediate beginning of peace negotiations; and the

third, demanding "an adequate representation of the Russian working class in the government."

If this last point is quoted correctly, then I understand why the bourgeoisie lauds Chkheidze, I understand why to the praise by the English Guchkovites in the *Times*, which I quoted above, there has now been added the praise by the French Guchkovites in the *Temps*. This organ of French millionaires and imperialists writes on March 22: "The leaders of the workers' parties, and especially Mr. Chkheidze, exert all their influence to temper the demands of the working classes."

Indeed, the demand for workers' "participation" in the Guchkov-Miliukov government is a theoretical and political absurdity; to participate as a minority would mean to be a pawn; to participate "on equal terms" is impossible, for one cannot reconcile the demand to continue the war with the demand to conclude an armistice and open peace negotiations; to "participate" as a majority, one must have power to overthrow the Guchkov-Miliukov government. In practice, to demand "participation" is to pursue the worst kind of Louis Blancism, *i. e.*, to forget the class struggle and its actual conditions, to be allured by empty, high-sounding phrases, to spread illusions among the workers, to waste, in negotiations with Miliukov and Kerensky, precious time which should be used for creating an actual class force, a revolutionary force, a proletarian militia capable of inspiring confidence in all the poorest strata of the population which are an overwhelming majority, and of helping them to organise, helping them to fight for bread, for peace, and for freedom.

This error in the proclamation of Chkheidze and his group (I do not speak of the party of the O.C., the Organisation Committee, for in the sources at my disposal there is no mention of the O.C.)—this error seems the more strange when we consider that at the conference of March 15, Skobelev, Chkheidze's closest ideological ally, said, according to the newspapers: "Russia is on the eve of a second, a real (*wirklichen*) revolution."

Now this is a truth from which Skobelev and Chkheidze have failed to make any practical deductions. I cannot judge from here, my accursed exile, how near the second revolution is. Skobelev, who is there on the spot, can see it better. I therefore do not occupy myself with the questions for the answer to which I have no concrete data and can have none. I simply emphasise the fact



that a "stranger," *i. e.*, one who does not belong to our party, Skobelev, confirms the *very* conclusion that I arrived at in the first letter, namely: that the March revolution was only the *first stage* of the revolution. Russia is going through a unique historical period of *transition* from the first to the next stage of the revolution or, as Skobelev expresses it, to "a second revolution."

If we want to be Marxists and to learn from the experience of the revolutions the world over, we must try to understand just wherein lies the *uniqueness* of this transition period, and what are the tactics that follow from its objective peculiarities.

The uniqueness of the situation lies in the fact that the Guchkov-Miliukov government has won the first victory with unusual ease because of the three following main circumstances: 1. The help received from Anglo-French finance capital and its agents; 2. The help received from the upper layers of the army; 3. The fact that the entire Russian bourgeoisie had been organised in zemstvo and city institutions, in the Imperial Duma, in the war industries committees, etc.

The Guchkov government finds itself between the upper and nether millstones. Bound by capitalist interests, it is compelled to strive to prolong the predatory war for plunder, to protect the monstrous profits of the capitalists and the landlords, to restore the monarchy. Bound by its revolutionary origin and the necessity of an abrupt change from tsarism to democracy, finding itself under the pressure of the hungry masses that clamour for peace, the government is forced to lie, to shift about, to procrastinate, to make as many "declarations" and promises as possible (promises are the only things that are very cheap even in an epoch of insanely high prices), and to carry out as few of them as possible, to make concessions with one hand, and to withdraw them with the other.

Under certain conditions, if circumstances are most favourable to it, the new government, relying on the organising abilities of the entire Russian bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia, may temporarily avert the final crash. But even under such conditions it cannot escape the crash altogether, for it is *impossible* to escape the claws of that terrible monster, begotten by world-capitalism—the imperialist war and famine,—without abandoning the whole basis of bourgeois relations, without resorting to revolutionary measures, without appealing to the greatest historical heroism of the Russian and the world proletariat.



Hence the conclusion: We shall not be able to overthrow the new government with one stroke or, should we be able to do so (in revolutionary times the limits of the possible are increased a thousandfold), we could not retain power, *unless we met* the splendid organisation of the entire Russian bourgeoisie and the entire bourgeois intelligentsia with an *organisation of the proletariat* just as splendid, leading the vast mass of the city and country poor, the semi-proletarians and the petty proprietors.

It matters little whether the "second revolution" has already broken out in Petrograd (I have stated that it would be absurd to attempt to estimate from abroad the actual tempo of its growth), whether it has been postponed for a time, or whether it has begun in isolated localities in Russia (there are some indications that this is the case)—*in any case* the slogan of the hour right now, on the eve of the revolution, during the revolution, and on the day after the revolution, must be—*proletarian organisation*.

Comrade-workers! Yesterday you displayed wonders of proletarian heroism when you overthrew the tsarist monarchy. Sooner or later (perhaps even now, while I am writing these lines) you will inevitably be called upon again to display wonders of similar heroism in overthrowing the power of the landowners and the capitalists who are waging the imperialist war. But you will not be able to win a *permanent victory* in this forthcoming "true" revolution, unless you display *wonders of proletarian organisation*!

The slogan of the hour is organisation. But organisation in itself does not mean much, because, on the one hand, organisation is always necessary, and, hence, the mere insistence on "the organisation of the masses" does not yet clarify anything, and because, on the other hand, he who contents himself with organisation only is merely echoing the views of the liberals; for the liberals, to strengthen their rule, desire nothing better than to have the workers refuse to go *beyond the usual "legal"* forms of organisation (from the point of view of "normal" bourgeois society), *i. e.*, to have them *merely* become members of their party, their trade union, their co-operative society, etc., etc.

The workers, guided by their class instinct, have realised that in revolutionary times they need an entirely different organisation, of a type above the ordinary. They have taken the right attitude suggested by the experience of our revolution of 1905 and by the Paris Commune of 1871: they have created a *Soviet of Workers' Deputies*,

they have set out to develop it, widen and strengthen it, by attracting to it representatives of the soldiers and no doubt of the hired agricultural workers, as well as (in one form or another) of the entire poor section of the peasantry.

To create similar organisations in all the localities of Russia without exception, for all the trades and layers of the proletarian and semi-proletarian population without exception, *i. e.*, for all the toilers and the exploited (to use an expression that is less exact from the point of view of economics but more popular), is our most important and most urgent task. I will note right here that to the peasant masses our party (whose specific rôle in the proletarian organisations of the new type I shall have occasion to discuss in one of the forthcoming letters) must recommend with special emphasis the organisation of Soviets of hired workers and petty agriculturists, such as do not sell their grain, those Soviets *to have no connection* with the prosperous peasants,—otherwise it will be impossible to pursue a true proletarian policy, in a general sense,\* nor will it be possible correctly to approach the most important practical question involving the life and death of millions of people, *i. e.*, the question of an equitable assessment of food deliveries, of increasing its production, etc.

The question, then, is: What is to be the work of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies? We repeat what we once said in No. 47 of the *Geneva Social-Democrat* (October 13, 1915): "They must be regarded as organs of insurrection, as organs of revolutionary power."

This theoretical formula, derived from the experience of the Commune of 1871 and of the Russian Revolution of 1905, must be elucidated and concretely developed on the basis of the practical experience gained at this very stage of this very revolution in Russia.

We need revolutionary *power*, we need (for a certain period of transition) the *state*. Therein we differ from the Anarchists. The difference between revolutionary Marxists and Anarchists lies not only in the fact that the former stand for huge, centralised, communist production, while the latter are for decentralised, small-scale production. No, the difference as to government authority and the

\* There will now develop in the village a struggle for the petty, and partly the middle, peasantry. The landowners, basing themselves on the well-to-do peasants, will lead them to submission to the bourgeoisie. We, basing ourselves on the hired agricultural workers and poor peasants, must lead them to the closest possible alliance with the proletariat of the cities.



state consists in this, that we stand *for* the revolutionary utilisation of revolutionary forms of the state in our struggle for Socialism, while the Anarchists are *against* it.

We need the state. But we need none of those types of state varying from a constitutional monarchy to the most democratic republic which the bourgeoisie has established everywhere. And herein lies the difference between us and the opportunists and Kautskians of the old, decaying Socialist parties who have distorted or forgotten the lessons of the Paris Commune and the analysis of these lessons by Marx and Engels.\*

We need the state, but not the kind needed by the bourgeoisie, with organs of power in the form of police, army, bureaucracy, distinct from and opposed to the people. All bourgeois revolutions have merely perfected this government apparatus, have merely transferred it from one party to another.

The proletariat, however, if it wants to preserve the gains of the present revolution and to proceed further to win peace, bread, and freedom, must "*destroy*," to use Marx's word, this "ready-made" state machinery, and must replace it by another one, *merging* the police, the army, and the bureaucracy *with the universally armed people*. Advancing along the road indicated by the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, the proletariat must *organise and arm all the poorest and most exploited sections of the population*, so that they *themselves* may take into their own hands all the organs of state power, that they *themselves* may constitute these organs.

The workers of Russia have already, with the very first stage of the first revolution, March, 1917, *entered* on this course. The whole problem now is to understand clearly the nature of this new course and courageously, firmly, and persistently, to continue on it.

The Anglo-French and the Russian capitalists wanted "only" to displace, or merely to "scare," Nicholas II, leaving the old machinery of the state—the police, the army, the bureaucracy—intact.

The workers have gone further; they have smashed it. And now not only the Anglo-French, but even the German capitalists howl with

\* In one of the forthcoming letters or in a special article I shall dwell in detail on this analysis as given particularly in Marx's *Civil War in France*, in Engels' preface to the third edition of that work, in Marx's letter dated April 12, 1871, and in Engel's letters of March 18-28, 1875, also on the complete distortion of Marxism by Kautsky in his 1912 polemics against Pannekoek relative to the so-called "destruction of the state."

rage and horror when they see Russian soldiers shooting their officers, some of whom were even supporters of Guchkov and Miliukov, as Admiral Nepenin, for example.

I have said that the workers have smashed the old state machinery. To be more precise. They *have begun* to smash it.

Let us take a concrete example.

The police of Petrograd and many other places have been partly killed off, and partly removed. The Guchkov-Miliukov government will not be able to restore the monarchy, nor even to retain power, unless it re-establishes the police as an organisation of armed men separated from and opposed to the people and under the command of the bourgeoisie. This is as clear as the clearest day.

On the other hand, the new government must reckon with the revolutionary masses, must humour them with half-concessions and promises, trying to gain time. Hence it agrees to half-measures: it institutes a "people's militia" with elected officers (this sounds terribly imposing, terribly democratic, revolutionary, and beautiful!). But . . . but . . . first of all, it places the militia under the control of the local zemstvo and city organs of self-government, *i. e.*, under the control of landowners and capitalists elected under the laws of Nicholas the Bloody and Stolypin the Hangman!! Secondly, though it calls it the "people's" militia to throw dust into the eyes of the "people," it does not, as a matter of fact call the people for *universal* service in this militia, nor does it compel the bosses and the capitalists to *pay* their employees the usual wage for the hours and the days they devote to public service, *i. e.*, to the militia.

There is where the main trick is. That is how the landowner and capitalist government of the Guchkovs and Miliukovs achieves its aim of keeping the "people's militia" on paper, while in reality it is quietly and step by step organising a bourgeois militia hostile to the people, first of "8,000 students and professors" (as the foreign press describes the present militia in Petrograd)—which is obviously a mere toy!—then, gradually, of the old and the new police.

Do not permit the re-establishment of the police! Do not let go the local government organs! Create a really universal militia, led by the proletariat! This is the task of the day, this is the slogan of the present hour, equally in accord with the correctly understood requirements of the further development of the class struggle, the further course of the revolution, and with the democratic



instinct of every worker, every peasant, every toiler, every one who is exploited, who cannot but hate the police, the constables, the command of landowners and capitalists over armed men who wield power over the people.

What kind of police do *they* need, these Guchkovs and Miliukovs, these landowners and capitalists? The same kind that existed during the tsarist monarchy. Following very brief revolutionary periods, *all* the bourgeois and bourgeois-democratic republics of the world organised or re-established precisely that kind of police,—a special organisation of armed men, separated from and opposed to the people, and in one way or another subordinated to the bourgeoisie.

What kind of militia do we need, we, the proletariat, all the toilers? A real people's militia, *i. e.*, first of all, one that consists of the entire population, of all the adult citizens of both sexes; secondly, one that combines the functions of a people's army with those of the police, and with the functions of the main and fundamental organ of the state system and the state administration.

To give more concreteness to these propositions, let us try a schematic example. Needless to say, the idea of laying out any "plan" for a proletarian militia would be absurd: when the workers, and all the people as a real mass, take up this task in a practical way, they will work it out and secure it a hundred times better than any theoretician can propose. I am not offering a plan—all I want is to illustrate my thought.

Petrograd has a population of about two million, more than half of which is between the ages of 15 and 65. Let us take a half—one million. Let us deduct one-fourth to allow for the sick or other instances where people cannot be engaged in public service for a valid reason. There still remain 750,000 persons, who, working in the militia one day out of every fifteen (and continuing to receive payment from their employers for this time), would make up an army of 50,000 people.

This is the type of "state" that we need!

This is the kind of militia that would be, in deed, and not only in name, a "people's militia."

This is the road we must follow if we wish to make impossible the re-establishment of a special police, or a special army, separated from the people.

Such a militia would, in ninety-five cases out of a hundred, be

composed of workers and peasants, and would express the real intelligence and the will, the strength and the authority of the overwhelming majority of the people. Such a militia would actually arm and give military training to the people at large, thus making sure, in a manner not employed by Guchkov, nor Miliukov, against all attempts to re-establish reaction, against all efforts of the tsarist agents. Such a militia would be the executive organ of the "Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies," it would enjoy the *full* respect and confidence of the population, because it would, itself, be an organisation of the entire population. Such a militia would change democracy from a pretty signboard, hiding the enslavement and deception of the people by the capitalists, into a real means for *educating the masses* so that they might be able to take part in *all* the affairs of the state. Such a militia would draw the youngsters into political life, training them not only by word, but by deed and *work*. Such a militia would develop those functions which belong, to use learned terms, to the welfare police, sanitary supervision, etc., by drawing into such activities all the adult women without exception. Without drawing the women into social service, into the militia, into political life, without tearing the women away from the stupefying domestic and kitchen atmosphere it is impossible to secure real freedom, it is impossible to build a democracy, let alone Socialism.

Such a militia would be a proletarian militia, because the industrial and the city workers would just as naturally and inevitably assume in it the leadership of the masses of the poor, as naturally and inevitably as they took the leading position in all the revolutionary struggles of the people in the years 1905-1907, and in 1917.

Such a militia would guarantee absolute order and a comradely discipline practiced with enthusiasm. At the same time, it would afford a means of struggling in a real democratic manner against the crisis through which all the warring nations are now passing; it would make possible the regular and prompt assessment of food and other supply levies, the establishment of "universal labour duty" which the French now call "civil mobilisation" and the Germans—"obligatory civil service," and without which, as has been demonstrated, it is impossible to heal the wounds that were and are being inflicted by this predatory and horrible war.

Has the proletariat of Russia shed its blood only to receive



luxurious promises of mere political democratic reforms? Will it not demand and make sure that every toiler should see and feel a certain improvement in his life right now? That every family should have sufficient bread? That every child should have a bottle of good milk, and that no adult in a rich family should dare take extra milk until all the children are supplied? That the palaces and luxurious homes left by the Tsar and the aristocracy should not stand idle but should provide shelter to the homeless and the destitute? What other organisation except a universal people's militia with women participating on a par with the men can effect these measures?

Such measures *do not yet* constitute Socialism. They deal with distribution of consumption, not with the reorganisation of industry. They do not yet constitute the "dictatorship of the proletariat," but merely a "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry." Theoretical classification doesn't matter now. It would indeed be a grave error if we tried now to fit the complex, urgent, rapidly unfolding practical tasks of the revolution into the Procrustean bed of a narrowly conceived "theory," instead of regarding theory first of all and above all as a *guide to action*.

Will the mass of Russian workers have sufficient class-consciousness, self-discipline and heroism to show "wonders of proletarian organisation" after they have displayed wonders of courage, initiative and self-sacrifice in direct revolutionary struggle? This we do not know, and to make conjectures about it would be idle, for such questions are answered *only* by life itself.

What we do know definitely and what we must as a party explain to the masses is that we have on hand an historic motive power of tremendous force that causes an unheard-of crisis, hunger and countless miseries. This motive power is the war which the capitalists of *both* warring camps are waging for predatory purposes. This "motive power" has brought a number of the richest, freest, and most enlightened nations to the brink of an abyss. It *forces* nations to strain all their strength to the breaking point, it places them in an insufferable position, it makes imperative the putting into effect not of "theories" (that is out of the question, and Marx had repeatedly warned Socialists against this illusion), but of most extreme yet practical measures, because *without* these extreme

measures there is death, immediate and indubitable death for millions of people through hunger.

That revolutionary enthusiasm on the part of the most advanced class can accomplish much when objective conditions demand extreme measures from the entire people, need not be argued. *This* aspect of the case is clearly seen and felt by every one in Russia.

It is important to understand that in revolutionary times the objective situation changes as rapidly and as suddenly as life itself. We should be able to adjust our tactics and our immediate objectives to the peculiarities of every given situation. Up to March, 1917, our task was to conduct a bold revolutionary-internationalist propaganda, to awaken and call the masses to struggle. In the March days there was required the courage of heroic struggle to crush tsarism—the most immediate foe. We are now going through a transition from the first stage of the revolution to the second, from a “grapple” with tsarism to a “grapple” with the imperialism of Guchkov-Miliukov, of the capitalists and the landowners. Our immediate problem is organisation, not in the sense of effecting ordinary organisation by ordinary methods, but in the sense of drawing large masses of the oppressed classes in unheard-of numbers into the organisation, and of embodying in this organisation military, state, and national economic problems.

The proletariat has approached this unique task and will approach it in a variety of ways. In some localities of Russia the March revolution has given the proletariat almost full power,—in others, the proletariat will begin to build up and strengthen the proletarian militia perhaps by “usurpation”;—in still others, it will, probably, work for immediate elections, on the basis of universal suffrage, to the city councils and zemstvos, in order to turn them into revolutionary centres, etc., until the growth of proletarian organisation, the rapprochement of soldiers and workers, the stirring within the peasantry, the disillusionment of very many about the competence of the militarist-imperialist government of Guchkov and Miliukov shall have brought nearer the hour when that government will give place to the “government” of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies.

Nor must we forget that right near Petrograd there is one of the most advanced, actually republican, countries—Finland,—a country which from 1905 up to 1917, shielded by the revolutionary struggles in Russia, has developed a democracy by comparatively peaceful



means, and has won the majority of its population over to Socialism. The Russian proletariat will insure the freedom of the Finnish republic, even to the point of separation (there is hardly a Social-Democrat who would hesitate on this score now, when the Cadet Rodichev is so shamefully haggling in Helsingfors over bits of privileges for the Great Russians), and thus gain the full confidence and comradely aid of the Finnish workers for the all-Russian proletarian cause. In a difficult and great cause errors are unavoidable, nor shall we avoid them; the Finnish workers are better organisers, they will help us in this and, *in their own way*, bring nearer the establishment of a Socialist republic.

Revolutionary victories in Russia itself,—quiet organisational successes in Finland shielded by the above victories,—the Russian workers taking up revolutionary-organisational tasks on a new scale,—conquest of power by the proletariat and the poorest strata of the population,—encouraging and developing the Socialist revolution in the West,—this is the path that will lead us to peace and Socialism.

N. LENIN.

Zürich, March 24, 1917.

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## FOURTH LETTER

### HOW TO GET PEACE

I HAVE just read (March 25) the following despatch sent to the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (No. 517, March 24) from Berlin:

"It is reported from Sweden that Maxim Gorki has sent both to the government, and to the Executive Committee [of the Soviet] an enthusiastically written greeting. He hails the victory of the people over the masters of reaction and calls upon all sons of Russia to help build the new Russian state edifice. At the same time he calls upon the government to crown its work of liberation with the conclusion of peace. It must not be peace at any price, he says; at the present moment Russia has less cause to strive for peace at any price than she has had at any other time. It must be a peace, he says, that would enable Russia to live honourably before the eyes of all the other peoples of the earth. Humanity has bled enough;

the new government would perform the greatest service to Russia as well as to the rest of humanity, if it succeeded in bringing about an early peace."

Thus reads the report of Gorki's letter.

One feels embittered on reading this letter which is permeated with ordinary philistine prejudices. The present writer on many occasions, in meetings with Gorki on the Island of Capri, warned him and reproached him for his political errors. Gorki parried these reproaches with his inimitably sweet smile and the candid admission: "I know that I am a bad Marxist. Moreover, all of us artists are a bit irresponsible." It is not easy to argue against that.

Gorki has, no doubt, great artistic talent that has been and will be of great use to the proletarian movement of the world.

But why should Gorki dabble in politics?

In my opinion Gorki's letter voices preconceived ideas that are exceedingly widespread not only among the petty bourgeoisie, but also among a section of the workers under the influence of that bourgeoisie. The entire strength of our party, every effort of the class-conscious workers, must be directed toward a stubborn, persistent, and many-sided fight against these false ideas.

The tsarist government began and waged the present war as a predatory, imperialist war for spoliation, to rob and crush the weak nations. The government of the Guchkovs and Miliukovs, which is a landowners' and capitalists' government, is forced to continue and wants to continue the very same kind of a war. To come to that government with the suggestion that it should conclude a democratic peace is equivalent to approaching proprietors of houses of ill fame with a sermon on virtue.

Let us explain what we mean.

What is imperialism?

In my pamphlet, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which, before the revolution, had been submitted to the publishing firm "Parus," [Sail], accepted by it and announced in the magazine *Lietopis* [Annals], I have answered this question in the following way:

"Imperialism is capitalism in that phase of its development in which the domination of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired very great importance; in which the division of the world among international trusts has begun; in which the partition of all the territories



of the earth among the greatest capitalist countries has been completed." (Chapter VII of the above-named pamphlet, announced in the *Lietopis*, when there was still a censorship; under the title: V. Ilyin,\* *Recent Capitalism*.)

The whole thing reduces itself to the fact that capital has grown to enormous dimensions. Associations of a small number of the greatest capitalists (cartels, syndicates, trusts) manipulate billions and divide the whole world among themselves. The earth has been completely divided. The war has been brought on by the clash of two mighty groups of billionaires, the Anglo-French and the German, over the redivision of the world.

The Anglo-French group of capitalists wishes first of all to rob Germany by taking away its colonies (almost all of them have already been taken away)—then to rob Turkey.

The German group of capitalists wishes to grab Turkey for itself and to compensate itself for the loss of the colonies by seizing the neighbouring small states (Belgium, Serbia, Rumania).

This is the real truth, concealed under various bourgeois lies such as "war for liberation," "national" war, a "war for right and justice" and similar toy-rattles with which the capitalists always fool the common people.

Russia is fighting this war not with its own money. Russian capital is the partner of Anglo-French capital. Russia is fighting this war in order that it may rob Armenia, Turkey, Galicia.

Guchkov, Lvov, Miliukov, our present Ministers, are not leaders by accident. They are the representatives and leaders of the entire class of landowners and capitalists. They are bound by the interests of capital. Capitalists are as incapable of sacrificing their interests as man is incapable of lifting himself by his own bootstraps.

Secondly, Guchkov, Miliukov and Co. are bound by Anglo-French capital. They have been and still are conducting the war on borrowed money. They have promised to pay on the borrowed billions interest amounting to hundreds of millions yearly, to squeeze this tribute out of the Russian workers and the Russian peasants.

Thirdly, Guchkov, Miliukov and Co. are bound to England, France, Italy, Japan, and other groups of capitalist-robbers by direct treaties dealing with the predatory aims of the war. These treaties were concluded by Tsar Nicholas II. Guchkov, Miliukov and Co., taking advantage of the struggle of the workers against

\* One of Lenin's pen names.—*Ed.*

the tsarist monarchy, seized power, but they have confirmed the treaties concluded by the Tsar.

This was done by the entire Guchkov-Miliukov government in a Manifesto which the Petrograd Telegraph Agency reported abroad on March 20: "The government" (of Guchkov and Miliukov), says the Manifesto, "aims to live up faithfully to all its treaty obligations to other countries." The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miliukov, made a similar declaration in his telegram to all the representatives of Russia abroad (March 18, 1917).

These treaties are all secret, and Miliukov and Co. do not wish to publish them for two reasons: (1) They are afraid of the people, which does not want any predatory war. (2) They are bound by Anglo-French capital, which demands that the treaties remain secret. But any one who has read newspapers and who has studied the subject knows that these treaties deal with the looting of China by Japan; of Persia, Armenia, Turkey (Constantinople in particular), and Galicia, by Russia; of Albania, by Italy; of Turkey, the German colonies, etc., by France and England.

That is how things stand.

That is why there is just as much sense in asking the Guchkov-Miliukov government speedily to conclude an honest, democratic, neighbourly peace as there is in the appeal of the kindly village priest to the landlords and merchants to live a godly life, to love their neighbours, and to turn the right cheek when one strikes them on the left. The landowners and the merchants listen to the sermon, continue to oppress and rob the people and extol the priest's ability to console and pacify the peasants.

Precisely the same rôle—whether they realise it or not—is played by all those who in the present imperialist war come to the bourgeois governments with kindly proposals of peace. The bourgeois governments at times refuse to listen to such proposals and even prohibit them altogether, but sometimes countenance them and issue assurances right and left that what they are really fighting for is the speedy conclusion of a "most righteous" peace, and that the only one at fault is the enemy. All such proposals of peace and appeals to bourgeois governments turn out in fact to be a hoax upon the people.

The groups of capitalists who have drenched the earth in blood over the partition of territories, markets, and concessions, cannot conclude an "honourable" peace. They can conclude only a



dishonourable peace, a peace based on the division of spoils, on the partition of Turkey and the colonies.

Moreover, the Guchkov-Miliukov government is altogether opposed to peace at the present moment, for now its share of the spoils would include only Armenia and a part of Galicia, whereas its real aim is to seize Constantinople, and to regain from the Germans Poland, a country that was always inhumanly and disgracefully oppressed by tsarism. Furthermore, the Guchkov-Miliukov government is essentially the errand boy of Anglo-French capital that wants to retain the colonies wrested from Germany and also to compel Germany to hand back Belgium and a part of France. Anglo-French capital has helped the Guchkovs and the Miliukovs to remove Nicholas II, in order that the Guchkovs and the Miliukovs might help it to "vanquish" Germany.

What then is to be done?

In order to obtain peace (and particularly, to obtain a really democratic, a really honourable peace), it is necessary that the power of the state should be in the hands not of the landlords and the capitalists, but in the hands of the workers and the poorest peasants. The landlords and the capitalists constitute an insignificant minority of the population; the capitalists, as every one knows, are making enormous profits out of the war.

The workers and the poorest peasants constitute an overwhelming majority of the population. Far from enriching themselves out of the war, they are actually being ruined and starved. They are bound neither by capital nor by treaties with predatory capitalist gangs; they are in a position and sincerely wish to bring the war to an end.

Were the state power in Russia to belong to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, these Soviets and the All-Russian Soviet elected by them could and certainly would agree to put into effect the peace programme which our party (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party), had outlined as far back as October 13, 1915, and printed in No. 47 of *Social-Democrat*, the Central Organ of our party (published then in Geneva on account of the oppressive tsarist censorship).

This peace programme would probably be as follows:

1. The All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies (or the Petrograd Soviet which temporarily takes its place) would immediately declare that it was not bound by any

treaties concluded either by the tsarist monarchy or by the bourgeois governments.

2. It would forthwith publish all these treaties in order to expose to public obloquy the predatory aims of the tsarist monarchy and of all bourgeois governments, without exception.

3. It would immediately and openly propose to all the warring nations that an armistice be concluded forthwith.

4. It would immediately publish, so that every one might know, our, the workers' and the peasants', conditions for peace: the liberation of all colonies; the liberation of all dependent, oppressed, and non-sovereign peoples.

5. It would declare that it expected no good to come from the bourgeois governments and that it proposed to the workers of all the countries to overthrow them and to transfer all the state power to Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

6. It would declare that the billion-ruble debts contracted by the bourgeois governments for the purpose of carrying on this criminal and predatory war should be paid by the capitalists themselves, and that the workers and peasants refused to recognise these debts. To pay interest on these debts would mean to pay tribute to the capitalists for many, many years for having generously permitted the workers to kill one another over the division of spoils by the capitalists.

The Soviet of Workers' Deputies would say: Workers and peasants! Are you willing to pay hundreds of millions of rubles yearly to compensate the capitalists for a war that has been waged for the purpose of partitioning the African colonies, Turkey, etc.?

For the enforcement of such conditions of peace the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, in my opinion, would agree to wage war against any bourgeois government and against all bourgeois governments of the world, because a war in that case would be a really just war and all the workers and toilers of all countries would work for its success.

The German worker sees now that the militarist monarchy in Russia is being replaced by a militarist republic, a republic of capitalists who wish to continue the imperialist war, who sanction the predatory treaties of the tsarist monarchy.

Judge for yourselves, can the German worker trust such a republic?



Judge for yourselves, can the war continue, can the domination of capitalists in the world continue, if the Russian people, always sustained by the living memories of the great revolution of 1905, wins complete freedom and places the entire state power in the hands of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies?

Zürich, March 25, 1917.

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## FIFTH LETTER

### PROBLEMS OF REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAN ORGANISATION OF THE STATE

IN the foregoing letters the tasks of the revolutionary proletariat of Russia have been outlined as follows: (1) To find the surest road leading to the next stage of the revolution or to the second revolution, which revolution (2) shall transfer the state power from the government of landowners and capitalists (the Guchkovs, Lvovs, Miliukovs, Kerenskys) to a government of the workers and poorest peasants. (3) The latter government must be organised on the model of the Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, namely (4), it must shatter and completely eliminate the old government apparatus prevailing in all the bourgeois countries, the army, the police, the bureaucracy, putting in its place (5) not only a mass organisation but an organisation of a universally armed people. (6) Only such a government, with "such" a class composition (revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry) and such administrative organs (proletarian militia) will be able to solve successfully the exceedingly difficult, urgent, and most important problem of the moment, *i. e.*, the problem of obtaining peace, not an imperialist peace, not agreements among imperialist governments concerning the division of spoils by the capitalists and their governments, but a true, permanent, democratic peace which cannot be attained without a proletarian revolution in a number of countries. (7) In Russia the victory of the proletariat can be accomplished in the nearest future only if the workers are at the very outset supported by an overwhelming majority of the peasantry in its fight for the confiscation of all the lands owned by the landowners, and for the nationalisation of the

entire land, if we assume that the agrarian programme of the "104" \* is still essentially the agrarian programme of the peasantry. (8) In connection with and on the basis of such a peasant revolution further steps of the proletariat in union with the poorest section of the peasantry are possible and necessary, steps directed towards the control of industry and the distribution of basic products, towards the establishment of "universal labour duty," etc. These steps are absolutely and imperatively demanded by the conditions created by the war, conditions which are likely to become even more aggravated in post-war times; in their entirety and in their development, these steps would represent the *transition to Socialism*, which in Russia cannot be realised immediately, directly, without transition measures, which, however, is perfectly realisable and urgently needed as a result of such transition measures. (9) The task of immediately organising in the villages separate Soviets of Workers' Deputies, *i. e.*, Soviets of hired agricultural workers, distinct from the Soviets of the rest of the peasant deputies, appears to be most urgent.

This, in short, is the programme we outlined, after taking stock of the class forces of the Russian and the world revolutions, as well as of the experience of 1871 and 1905.

Let us now attempt a general view of this programme as a whole, considering at the same time the manner in which it was approached by K. Kautsky, the greatest theoretician of the "Second" International (1889-1914) and the most conspicuous representative of the "centre" or the "swamp" group observable in all the countries, *i. e.*, the group that vacillates between the social-chauvinists and the revolutionary internationalists. Kautsky discussed this subject in his journal (*Die Neue Zeit*, April 6, 1917) in an article entitled, "The Prospects of the Russian Revolution."

"First of all," says Kautsky, "we must make clear to ourselves the problems confronting the revolutionary proletarian régime."

"Two things," continues the author, "are absolutely necessary to the proletariat: democracy and Socialism."

Unfortunately, this absolutely incontestable premise is propounded by Kautsky in an extremely generalised form, so that it really offers nothing and clarifies nothing. Miliukov and Kerensky,

\* The programme for the nationalisation of the land presented in the Second Duma by 104 peasant deputies.—*Ed.*



members of the bourgeois and imperialist government, would readily subscribe to this general premise, the one to the former, the other to the latter part. . . .\*

Written April 8, 1917.

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## FAREWELL LETTER TO THE SWISS WORKERS

### COMRADES, SWISS WORKERS:

Leaving Switzerland for Russia, in order to continue the revolutionary-internationalist work in our country, we, members of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party united under the Central Committee (in distinction from another party bearing the same name but united under the Organisation Committee), wish to convey to you our fraternal greetings and expression of our profound comradely gratitude for your comradely attitude to the political emigrants.

If the avowed social-patriots and opportunists, the Swiss Gruetlians who, like the social-patriots of all countries, have deserted the camp of the proletariat for the camp of the bourgeoisie; if these people have openly called upon you to fight against the harmful influence of foreigners upon the Swiss labour movement; if the disguised social-patriots and opportunists who constitute a majority among the leaders of the Swiss Socialist Party have been pursuing similar tactics under cover, we think it necessary to declare that on the part of the revolutionary Socialist workers of Switzerland holding internationalist views we have met with warm sympathy, and have derived a great deal of benefit from our comradely relations with them.

We have always been particularly careful in dealing with those questions of the Swiss movement, acquaintance with which requires prolonged participation in the local movement. But those of us who have been members of the Swiss Socialist Party, the number hardly exceeding from ten to fifteen, have regarded it as our duty steadfastly to maintain our point of view, *i. e.*, the point of view of the "Zimmerwald Left," on general and fundamental questions pertaining to the international and Socialist movement, to fight

\* Manuscript unfinished.—*Ed.*

determinedly not only social-patriotism, but also the line of the so-called "centre" to which belong R. Grimm, F. Schneider, Jacques Schmidt, and others in Switzerland, Kautsky, Haase, and the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* in Germany, Longuet, Pressemane, and others in France, Snowden, Ramsay MacDonald, and others in England, Turati, Treves, and their friends in Italy, and the above-mentioned party headed by the Organisation Committee (Axelrod, Martov, Chkhaidze, Skobelev, and others) in Russia.

We have worked hand in hand with those revolutionary Social-Democrats of Switzerland who were grouped about the magazine, *Freie Jugend*; who formulated and circulated (in the German and French languages) the proposals for the holding of a referendum regarding a party conference in April, 1917, to take up the question of the party's attitude to the war; who at the convention of the Zürich Canton in Töss introduced the resolution of the young and the "Lefts" dealing with the question of war; who in March, 1917, issued and circulated in certain localities of French Switzerland a leaflet in the German and French languages entitled, "Our Conditions of Peace," etc.

We are sending our fraternal greetings to these comrades, with whom we have been working together, in agreement.

We have not, and we never had, the slightest doubt that the imperialist government of England will under no circumstances permit the return to Russia of Russian internationalists, who are irrevocably against the imperialist government of Guchkov-Miliukov and Co., and irrevocably against the continuation of the imperialist war by Russia.

In connection with this we must say a few words about our understanding of the tasks of the Russian Revolution. We deem this all the more necessary because through the Swiss workers we can and must address ourselves to the German, French, and Italian workers, who speak the same languages as the population of Switzerland that still enjoys the advantages of peace and the relatively greatest political freedom.

We remain unconditionally loyal to the declaration which we made in the central organ of our party, No. 47 of the *Social-Democrat* (October 13, 1915), published in Geneva. We stated there that should the revolution prove victorious in Russia, and should a republican government, a government intent on continuing the imperialist war, a war in league with the imperialist bour-



geoisie of England and France, a war for the purpose of seizing Constantinople, Armenia, Galicia, etc., etc., find itself in power, that we would be most resolutely opposed to such a government, that we would be against the "defence of the fatherland" in such a war.

A contingency approaching the above has now arisen. The new government of Russia, which has conducted negotiations with the brother of Nicholas II with regard to the restoration of the monarchy in Russia, and in which the most important and influential posts have been given to the monarchists Lvov and Guchkov, this government is trying to deceive the workers by the slogan, "the Germans must overthrow Wilhelm" (correct, but why not add: the English, the Italians, etc., must do the same to their own kings; and the Russians must remove their monarchists Lvov and Guchkov?). This government, by using the above slogan, while refusing to publish the imperialist, predatory treaties concluded by the Tsar with France, England, etc., and confirmed by the government of Guchkov-Miliukov-Kerensky, is trying to represent its imperialist war with Germany as a war of "defence" (*i. e.*, as a just war, legitimate even from the point of view of the proletariat)—is trying to represent a war for the defence of the bloodthirsty, imperialist, predatory aims of capital—Russian, English, etc.—as the "defence" of the republic (which does not yet exist in Russia, and which the Lvovs and the Guchkovs have not even promised to establish).

If there is truth in the latest telegraphic reports that the avowed Russian social-patriots (such as Plekhanov, Zasulich, Potresov, etc.) have entered into something like a rapprochement with the party of the "centre," the party of the "Organisation Committee," the party of Chkhaidze, Skobelev, etc., on the basis of a common slogan: "While the Germans do not overthrow Wilhelm, our war remains a defensive war,"—if this is true, then we shall redouble our energy in carrying on the struggle against the party of Chkhaidze, Skobelev, etc., which we have always waged against that party for its opportunist, vacillating, unstable political behaviour.

Our slogan is: No support to the government of Guchkov-Miliukov! He who says that such support is necessary in order to fight against the restoration of the monarchy deceives the people. On the contrary, it is this very government of Guchkov that has already conducted negotiations concerning the restoration of the monarchy in Russia. Only the arming of the proletariat can prevent Guchkov and Co. from restoring monarchy in Russia. Only the proletariat of

Russia and the rest of Europe, remaining loyal to internationalism, is capable of ridding humanity of the horrors of the imperialist war.

We do not close our eyes to the tremendous difficulties facing the revolutionary-internationalist vanguard of the Russian proletariat. In these times most sudden and swift changes are possible. In No. 47 of the *Social-Democrat* we gave a clear and direct answer to the question that naturally arises: What would our party do, if the revolution placed it immediately in power? Our answer was: 1. We would forthwith offer peace to all the warring peoples; 2. We would announce our peace conditions consisting of immediate liberation of all the colonies and all the oppressed and non-sovereign peoples; 3. We would immediately begin and carry out the liberation of all the peoples oppressed by the Great-Russians; 4. We do not deceive ourselves for one moment, we know that such conditions would be unacceptable not only to the monarchist but also to the republican bourgeoisie of Germany, and not only to Germany, but also to the capitalist governments of England and France.

We would be forced to carry on a revolutionary struggle against the German—and not only the German—bourgeoisie. *This struggle we would carry on.* We are not pacifists. We are opposed to imperialist wars over the division of spoils among the capitalists, but we have always considered it absurd for the revolutionary proletariat to disavow revolutionary wars that may prove necessary in the interests of Socialism.

The task that we outlined in No. 47 of the *Social-Democrat* is of gigantic proportions. It can be solved only by a long series of great class conflicts between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. However, it was not our impatience, nor our wishes, but the objective conditions created by the imperialist war that brought humanity to an impasse, that placed it in a dilemma: either to allow the destruction of more millions of lives and utterly ruin the entire European civilisation, or to hand over the power in *all* the civilised countries to the revolutionary proletariat, to realise the Socialist overturn.

The great honour of beginning the series of revolutions caused with objective inevitability by the war has fallen to the Russian proletariat. But the idea that the Russian proletariat is the chosen revolutionary proletariat among the workers of the world is absolutely alien to us. We know full well that the proletariat of Russia is less organised, less prepared, and less class-conscious than the proletariat of other countries. It is not its special qualities but rather



the special coincidence of historical circumstances that has made the proletariat of Russia for a certain, perhaps very short time, the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat of the whole world.

Russia is a peasant country, it is one of the most backward of European countries. Socialism cannot triumph there immediately. But the present character of the country in the face of a vast reserve of land retained by noblemen landowners may, to judge from the experience of 1905, gives tremendous sweep to the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, and may make our revolution a prologue to the world Socialist revolution, a step forward in that direction.

In the struggle for these ideas, which have been fully confirmed by the experience of 1905 and the spring of 1917, in the struggle against all the other parties, our party was formed, and for these ideas we shall continue to struggle.

In Russia Socialism cannot triumph directly and immediately. But the peasant mass may bring the inevitable and ripe agrarian upheaval to the point of confiscating all the immense holdings of the landowners. This has always been our slogan and now the Petrograd and the Central Committees of our party, as well as the paper of our party, *Pravda*, have again brought it to the fore. The proletariat is going to fight for this slogan without closing its eyes to the inevitability of cruel class conflicts between the hired agricultural workers and the impoverished peasants closely allied with them on the one hand and the prosperous peasants whose position has been strengthened by the agrarian "reform" of Stolypin (1907-1914) on the other. One must not forget that 104 peasant Deputies in the first (1906) and second (1907) Dumas came forward with a revolutionary agrarian bill demanding the nationalisation of all lands and the management of such lands by local committees elected on the basis of complete democracy.

Such an overturn would, in itself, not be Socialism as yet. But it would give a great impetus to the world labour movement. It would greatly strengthen the position of a Socialist overturn in Russia, and of its influence on the agricultural workers and the poorest peasants. It would enable the city proletariat to develop, on the strength of this influence, a revolutionary organisation like the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, to replace by them the old instruments of oppression used by the bourgeois states, the army, the police, the bureaucracy; to put into effect, under the pressure of the unbearably burdensome imperialist war and its consequences, a

series of revolutionary measures to insure control over the production and distribution of goods.

The Russian proletariat single-handed cannot bring the Socialist revolution to a victorious conclusion. But it can give the Russian Revolution a mighty sweep such as would create most favourable conditions for a Socialist revolution, and would, in a sense, start it. It can help create more favourable circumstances for its most important, most trustworthy and most reliable collaborator, the European and the American Socialist proletariat, to join in the decisive battles.

Let the sceptics despair because of the temporary triumph within the European Socialist movement of such disgusting lackeys of the imperialist bourgeoisie as the Scheidemanns, the Legiens, the Davids and Co. in Germany; Sembat, Guesde, Renaudel and Co. in France; the Fabians and the Labourites in England. We are firmly convinced that this filthy froth on the surface of the world labour movement will be soon swept away by the waves of the revolution.

In Germany there is already a seething unrest of the proletarian masses that contributed so much to humanity and Socialism by their persistent, unyielding, sustained organisational work during the many decades of the period of European "calm" from 1871 to 1914. The future of German Socialism is represented not by the traitors, the Scheidemanns, Legiens, Davids and Co., nor by the vacillating and spineless ones, Haase, Kautsky and their ilk, who have been enfeebled by the routine of the period of political "peace."

The future belongs to that tendency which has given us Karl Liebknecht, which has created the "Spartacus group,"\* which has carried on its propaganda in the Bremen *Arbeiterpolitik*.

The objective circumstances of the imperialist war make it certain that the revolution will not be limited to the first stage of the Russian Revolution, that the revolution will not be limited to Russia.

The German proletariat is the most trustworthy, the most reliable ally of the Russian and the world proletarian revolution.

When in November, 1914, our party had put forward the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" of the oppressed against the oppressors for the attainment of Socialism, this slogan was met with the hatred and malicious ridicule of the social-patriots and with the incredulous, sceptical, meek and expectant silence of the Social-

\* The group of revolutionary internationalists who later formed the Communist Party of Germany.—Ed.



Democratic "centre." David, the German social-chauvinist and social-imperialist, called it "insane," while Mr. Plekhanov, the representative of Russian (and Anglo-French) social-chauvinism, of Socialism in words, imperialism in deeds, called it "a dream farce" (*Mittelding zwischen Traum und Komoedie*\*). The representatives of the "centre" confined themselves to silence or to cheap little jokes about this "straight line drawn in empty space."

Now, after March, 1917, only the blind can fail to see that this slogan is correct. The turning of the imperialist war into civil war is becoming a fact.

Long live the proletarian revolution that is beginning in Europe!

Upon the instruction of the departing comrades, members of the R.S.-D.L.P. (united under the Central Committee), who have passed on this letter at a meeting held April 8, 1917.

N. LENIN.

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\* Something between a dream and a comedy.—*Ed.*

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